



ST STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

11856 MAYS CHAPEL RD., TIMONIUM, MD 21093

Sunday October 30th, 2016 - Trinity 23

✠ In The Name of The Father and of The Son and of The Holy Ghost. Amen. ✠

*“Render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s and
render unto God that which is God’s”*

Matthew 22:15

In today’s Gospel, we are treated to our Lord Jesus adroitly outwitting his earthly detractors in a way which we can readily see destroys their attempts to entangle him, turns the light upon them as self-righteous sinners and gives direction to us today in whom we choose to lodge our faith and trust.

The Gospel related how two very different groups, Pharisees and Herodians came together to entrap our Lord Jesus by asking a question which would have endangered him further with either the religious or secular authorities. If he spoke out in support of the tax, he would have increased resentment among the Pharisees and those who tire of being under the Roman yoke – especially the poor who bear a harder portion of the cost. Or, if our Lord sided with not paying the tax, the Herodians (supporters of Rome) would have seen this as disloyalty to Rome and certainly carried word of this rebellion to the Emperor. Either way, our Lord Jesus would be found “in the wrong” by one party or the other.

Our Lord Jesus side stepped the issue by asking for a coin. A coin was produced and He

asked whose face was upon the coin. Where upon he was told it bore the image of the Emperor Caesar. Our Lord Jesus then told them as this was Caesar’s coin they should give back to Caesar. Everyone marveled at His brilliance and went their way.

This was more than an account of Our Lord’s brilliance in the masterful use of debate. He tacitly condemned them for their own failings - their hypocrisies and provided us with a warning and a direction.

This interchange took place in the Temple, when Our Lord Jesus asked for a coin, it could be inferred He, Himself, had no money upon Him. The coin produced was not “temple money” – the kind you purchased for purchasing sacrifices – the kind that was acceptable to Our Lord God. It was, instead, a Roman coin. A coin bearing the image of the Emperor – a man. A coin representing the power of their oppressors. A coin that on its reverse, proclaimed the Emperor as Pontius Maximus - which could be translated as The Great High Priest. The fact they had that particular coin illustrates that they were comfortable with going along with their Roman oppressors. So much so, they had no trouble bringing such a coin, which by their own standards, could be considered both

idolatrous and blasphemous into the Jewish Temple. In one question, Our Lord Jesus pointed out that all of them, Pharisees included, were following their Roman masters – not their Lord God.

In Matthew 6:24, Our Lord Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other.” In our present passage, Our Lord Jesus said, “Render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s and unto God that which is God’s.” These really are not conflicting passages. Jesus is not suggesting you divide your loyalties between Caesar and God. *All* of your loyalty should be for God. Everything you have - you received from God. Everything you are - came from God. To God, you owe everything. You might budget your money as you choose, but your loyalty should be with God. Our founding fathers were not blind to this. Our money states, “In God We Trust.”

We live in a time where our national and state politics have become polarized, demeaned and serving various interests that have very little to do with God. Some of these special interests would like to see our trust and faith in God replaced with some human’s idea of what is right and proper. Some would support (vote for) only those that provide them with benefits, services, entertainment or handouts. Some would vote for those that would permit or even strengthen their own self-indulgent vices. These same people would interpret this passage, “render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s and render unto God what is God’s” as a statement advocating a *craven* separation of Church and State. It is not. Rather, “render unto God” is a statement that everything belongs to God and if we are to be loyal to God we should make decisions according to God’s stated Law. One who is Loyal to God cannot serve an earthly master – thus, for those loyal to God, you cannot separate Church and State.

Your decisions regarding the state must reflect your love and your obedience to God.

Some find difficulty in choosing a candidate for service to the State. Perhaps they feel that one, or the other, is too spiritually poor to make a Godly choice. All of the leaders our Lord God chose were not always the best moral examples. Some were not even of his chosen people. In the Book of Isaiah, Cyrus, King of Persia, a pagan and captor of the Jewish nation is moved to rebuild the Temple, give back the captured sacred vessels and send the Jews back to Israel. It could be argued that this pagan king did more for the Jewish people than many of their own leaders. God allowed Cyrus to be King of Persia, God can certainly make the most of other leaders.

In our process of prayer and discernment in choosing our next leader, we should reflect upon their beliefs and compare those beliefs to the Law of our Lord God. If we find they support an issue very counter to our Lord God’s Law, then that issue would disqualify them from our support. Our loyalty is manifest when we “render first onto our Lord God.”

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen